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WW PHOTO: J. LA RIVA

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Winter Soldier hearings Troops confirm U.S. war crimes

By Michael Kramer
Silver Spring, Md.

Hundreds of military veterans of the Bush administration's so-called war on terror attended the Winter Soldier 2008 hearings held here March 13-16 at the National Labor College, an AFL-CIO affiliate just outside Washington. The four-day event was organized by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Most of the veterans had taken part in the occupations of Iraq and/or Afghanistan—many doing multiple deployments of up to 15 months each. Some are still on active duty.

They described the systematic beating, jailing, torture, humiliation and killing of civilians by U.S. forces. And they explained that it was not just the work of a few deranged individuals but was part of standard military operations, especially as the opposition of the people to the occupation of their country became more obvious.

Many were wracked with traumatic memories and remorse for having participated in such acts.

The hearings were conducted in eyewitness panel formats with topics such as Rules of Engagement; Corporate Pillaging and Military Contractors; Divide To Conquer: Gender and Sexuality in the Military; and Racism and War: The Dehumanization of the Enemy.

Besides the panelists, the everyday brutality of the occupation was documented by more than 100 other veterans, who submitted detailed statements about their experiences.

Speaking on the first day of the hearings in the Rules of Engagement panel, Iraq veteran Adam Kokesh, who had been in Fallujah, Iraq, for a year beginning in February 2004, said his commanders "changed the RoE more often than we changed our underwear." These RoE are the rules that determine when a soldier can use deadly fire. "At one point, we imposed a curfew on the city and were told to fire at anything that moved in the dark. I don't think soldiers should be put in the position to choose between their morals and their instinct for survival."

Steve Casey, who spent a year in Iraq beginning in mid-2003, not long after the U.S. invasion that was supposed to "liberate" the Iraqi people, said: "I watched soldiers firing into the radiators and windows of oncoming vehicles. Those who didn't turn around were unfortunately neutralized one way or another—well over 20 times I personally witnessed this."

Jason Hurd was on duty in central Baghdad for a year, beginning in November 2004. He told how, after his unit took stray rounds from a nearby firefight: "We fired indiscriminately at this building. Things like that happened every day in Iraq. We reacted out of fear for our lives, and we reacted with total destruction."

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Protest hits Israel fund-raiser

Hundreds of people, many of them youths from the Palestinian communities in and around New York, picketed and chanted on Park Avenue across from the Waldorf Astoria on March 18 to protest the \$1,000-a-plate dinner to raise funds for the state terrorist actions of the "Israeli Defense Forces" (IDF), and the presence of Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

The New York fundraiser seems particularly offensive since it comes after a week in which the IDF killed 126 Palestinians, including many children and other obvious non-combatants. The Israeli military even

attacked Palestinian schools, mosques and soccer fields, killing children as they studied, prayed and played childhood games.

"It is incomprehensible and despicable that these war criminals—who just murdered over one hundred Palestinian innocents and children in their homes, in their schools and on playgrounds—have the audacity to come raise money for their genocidal plans and stuff their greedy faces on our streets," says a representative of Al-Awda, the group that called for the demonstration.

—John Catalinotto

Momentum grows as court date nears 'Justice for Larry Hales!'

By Frank Neisser

The campaign demanding justice for Larry Hales is gaining momentum. People around the country are outraged at the action last Nov. 30 of the Denver police, who stormed the home of Hales, a prominent anti-police brutality and political activist in Denver, as well as a central organizer for upcoming protests at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver.

On the false pretext of a 10:30 p.m. "parole visit" to a parolee staying with Hales, who was not at home at the time, 10 cops illegally burst into Hales' home without permission, ransacked the apartment, handcuffed his partner to a chair, brutalized Hales, pulling out several of his dreadlocks, and arrested him on bogus charges of "interfering with the police." Pretrial hearings that were to have occurred on Feb. 29 have been rescheduled to April 25, with the trial date rescheduled to May 21.

A National Justice for Larry Hales Committee has been formed. More than 700 people have participated in an online petition, sending more than 100,000 emails to the city attorney, judge and mayor, Denver City Council, Colorado legislature and governor, the full Colorado congressional delegation, congressional leaders, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Attorney General Mukasey, U.N. Secretary-General Ban and members of the media calling for all charges in the case to be dropped.

City councilors, lawyers and concerned clergy have faxed letters on their own letterhead to the mayor, city

attorney and judge. A letter signed by unionists from the United Federation of Teachers; UNITE HERE; United Steelworkers; United Auto Workers; Communication Workers union; American Federation of Teachers; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Office and Professional Employees International Union; Maryland Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; and others was also faxed to them.

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner's letter concluded, "We in Boston believe that an injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere, and we are prepared to stand with Mr. Hales until he receives justice."

USW Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, also sent a letter. It stated: "The prosecution of Mr. Hales is nothing more than a blatant racist frame up. We in the labor movement believe and live the time tested union motto that AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL! We stand in 100 percent solidarity with brother Hales and will be with him until justice is done."

Join the campaign by visiting troopsoutnow.org/larryhales and signing the online petition, faxing letters on organizational stationery, contacting others and spreading the word and putting out the information on listservs. Send copies of your messages to justice4larryhales@safewebmail.com. And if you are in the area, please plan to come and help pack the court on April 25th and May 21. □



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Rhode Island activists build for Poor Peoples March Against Poverty

By Frank Neisser
Providence, R.I.

Momentum is building here for a large Poor Peoples March Against Poverty on April 4, the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. At a time when the state faces a \$500 million budget deficit, on April 4 marchers will converge on the Rhode Island Statehouse at 4 p.m. to tell the legislature "No budget cuts!" "Tax the rich, not the poor!" and to demand jobs at living wages, housing, health care, education, utilities,

daycare, senior care and secure pensions for all. The demonstrators will demand the U.S. Congress cut off funds for war abroad, start funding an emergency war on poverty at home and reverse President Bush's tax cuts for the rich.

Activists expect to have distributed 20,000 flyers and posters by April 4. More than 4,000 flyers were handed out to attendees of a massive Obama rally the day before the Rhode Island primary. Youth and community organizations are jumping into the organizing, including Youth Build, Rhode Island Public Housing Tenants, the

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Pam Africa: 'Our drum major for justice!'

Pam Africa, leader of the International Concerned Friends and Family for Mumia Abu-Jamal, enjoyed a benefit in her honor at Brooklyn's Sistas' Place, sponsored by the December 12th Movement on March 9.

Prominent activists and leaders—some who have fought racism against the Black community for decades—spoke of knowing and respecting Africa over the years. Called a 'force of nature' by Larry Holmes of the International Action Center, his admiration for her was shared by everyone present.

Africa spoke of her recent visit to Mumia, as well as her support of the Move 9 in Philadelphia. Eight of the

remaining nine—after 30 years incarceration following a fascist police attack on them—are soon eligible for parole.

Africa also discussed how she got active and how important it was to save the environment and political prisoners. She said: "It was always a reason to fight. ... We all have to become aware and fight!"

—Report and photo by Anne Pruden



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National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
www.workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
426 E. 31 St.,
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-235-7040
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
617-983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org
workersworld.net/boston

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-566-1115
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
313-831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 595
Houston, TX 77001-0595
713-861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
111 N. La Brea Ave., #408
Inglewood, CA 90301
310-677-8647
la@workers.org

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 9202,
Philadelphia, PA 19139
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Raleigh, N.C.
raleigh@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92104
619-692-0355

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: editor@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
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Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
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Fed orchestrates Bear Stearns bailout as attacks on workers intensify

By Jaimeson Champion

In a speech delivered March 14 at the Economic Club of New York—a quasi fraternity of the economic elite—President George W. Bush asserted that the U.S. was going through an economic “rough patch” and asserted: “In a free market, there is going to be good times and there are going to be bad times. That’s how markets work.”

Bush has a reputation for being completely out of touch with reality, so the extremely understated nature of his “rough patch” characterization is not surprising. But the “good times” and “bad times” dichotomy he referred to has been a reoccurring theme in the capitalist-controlled press lately. It is a point that requires clarification.

For the working class in the U.S., the “good times” the president and bourgeois pundits are constantly referring to were completely illusory.

Following the official end of the last recession in 2002, job growth never returned to pre-recession levels in many areas. Wages lagged inflation throughout the entirety of the so-called recovery. The standard of living for the working class in the U.S. has steadily declined. An increasing number of workers have been forced to use credit cards and other loans to pay for items of subsistence. For the working class it has been more equivalent to one prolonged recession, dulled for a short time by a historic rise in indebtedness.

The only ones who experienced “good times” after the end of the last recession are the greedy bankers, bosses and speculators on Wall Street who sucked trillions upon trillions of dollars in profits out of the workers.

Now that the rate of profit is falling, and the bad times have arrived, it is these same bankers and speculators who are being bailed out with hundreds of billions of dollars from the U.S. Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve, in conjunction with the Treasury Department, is attempting to systematically insulate the bankers and bosses from further profit loss.

It is the workers who are facing increasing attacks by the ruling class in the form of foreclosures, layoffs, wage decreases and cuts in vitally important social services. The ruling class is systematically directing the pain and suffering onto the backs of the workers.

The Bear Stearns bailout

At the same time Bush was delivering his platitudes to the Economic Club, the Federal Reserve was frantically devising a rescue plan for Bear Stearns, the fifth-largest investment bank in the U.S., which was on the precipice of collapse.

During the housing bubble of 2002-2006, Bear Stearns was one of the biggest players in the securitization of trillions of dollars worth of mortgage debt. Securitization facilitates predatory lending and spreads around the risk by pooling loans and then reselling them.

Its portfolios became loaded with a toxic mix of rapidly souring asset-backed securities. As the financial crisis deepened, and the collateral it had put up to get bank loans lost value, Bear Stearns was subject to increasing margin calls—meaning the bankers demanded more money or securities once Bear Stearns’ collateral sank below a certain point.

It was the liquidation of two Bear Stearns hedge funds—relatively unregulated investment pools—back in late June

2007 that first set off alarm bells about the threat that subprime mortgage defaults posed to Wall Street’s profits, and hinted at the major financial crisis that would soon follow.

By this March 14, the bank was under siege by investors who were demanding their money back, in what was the largest run on a U.S. bank since the Great Depression.

The Federal Reserve, fearing that an unchecked bank collapse of Bear Stearns’s size would trigger a domino effect of cascading bank failures, held round-the-clock meetings on the weekend of March 15-16 to orchestrate a bailout.

On March 16 they forced the sale of Bear Stearns to another investment bank, JPMorgan Chase, at the fire-sale price of \$2 a share. A year ago, its stock sold for \$170 a share.

At the closing bell on March 13, Bear Stearns was still the fifth-largest investment bank in the U.S. But before the U.S. stock markets opened on March 17, the entire bank had been sold for an amount less than the value of the Manhattan building it had been using for its New York headquarters.

Bigger taxpayer-financed bailouts are looming

So why did JPMorgan want to buy this shell of a bank? The Federal Reserve had agreed to advance the money JPMorgan is using to buy Bear Stearns. So, in essence, the Federal Reserve is taking the bank’s toxic portfolios onto its own balance sheet.

By bailing out Bear Stearns and giving hundreds of billions of dollars to the other big banks through the Term Auction Facility program and rate cuts, the Federal

Reserve is monetizing private sector debt. In other words, it is dealing with the huge debt problem by adding to the money supply—and thus further exacerbating inflation.

Every rise in inflation is a wage cut for workers, as their take-home pay loses its purchasing power. Federal Reserve Chair Benjamin Bernanke is showering money down on the banks in a frantic effort to stop the financial contagion from spreading, and is intensifying the attacks on the working class in the process.

But even Bernanke knows there are limits to how much worthless collateral the Fed can take onto its books at one time. Bear Stearns was the first to experience a bank run, but it is unlikely to be the last. Citigroup, Lehman Brothers, and a host of other large U.S. banks are in similar predicaments.

The ruling class knows the Fed can’t bail out the entire financial system in this manner and is undoubtedly devising new ways to throw money at the banks. Future attacks on the working class are likely to take the form of all manner of new taxes, which the government will use to help finance the bailouts of the capitalist banks.

These intensifying attacks during a time of capitalist crisis can only be successfully combated through the growth of working-class solidarity. The attacks must be confronted in the streets, in cities and towns across the country by a militant multinational working-class movement demanding an immediate end to foreclosures, layoffs and wage cuts.

The billionaires are united in their war against the workers during this time of crisis. They can only be defeated by a united working class. □

Millions could be forced out of school as

Financial crisis hits students

By Julie Fry

For most students, borrowing money has become a necessary part of going to college. The average student now graduates with at least \$21,000 in debt and it is not at all uncommon for students to graduate with \$100,000 in debt or more. At the same time, tuition at private universities and colleges has enormously increased—far ahead of inflation.

Parents are losing their jobs or their salaries are declining, so family contributions to education costs are decreasing. These factors mean that students from an increasingly broader economic spectrum are more dependent than ever on student loans.

That is why every student who is attending or is applying to college right now must be horrified by what is taking place in the financial markets. In February, it became clear that what was originally reported by the mainstream press as a crisis in the risky subprime mortgage market, was now affecting what have been traditionally thought of as incredibly stable investments—like bonds for student loans.

Here’s what is happening: many state and local governments secure money for public or quasi-public programs through a venue that most people have never heard of called the market for auction-rate securities. Before the financial crisis, auction-rate securities offered the government borrowers a very low interest rate and it

offered lenders (banks and other corporations) ready access to their cash investment through regularly scheduled auctions for the bonds, where they could sell their investment and get their cash back on sometimes a weekly basis. They were earning a higher return than they would with their money in a bank.

All the investments were insured by companies called bond insurers, which specialize in guaranteeing this kind of debt. Here is where things started to unravel. These bond insurers also insure other types of debt—like subprime mortgages. Now that these insurance companies are going to have to secure those loans, the banks don’t think they can guarantee student loan debt as well.

But that is really just one aspect of the crisis. Sallie Mae, the biggest lender to students, reported a \$1.6 billion loss in the last financial quarter. This was largely reported as resulting from a huge increase in defaults on these loans. The amount of debt that the Department of Education alone has accumulated from student loans is now more than \$40 billion dollars. In fact, right now the only bright spot in the student loan market for investors is in the private collection agency market, which is reporting record profits.

On top of that, the federal government, which subsidizes many student loans and regulates the interest rates as well, cut its subsidies in 2007, further aggravating the default situation and the credit crisis.

All this means that what was once considered one of the safest investments is now among the most risky, with students failing to pay off their debts and no one available to insure the loss.

Therefore, at the auctions for these loans lately, no one has been showing up to buy them—which means that the source of money for student loans is drying up and, not only that, the interest rates on the loans are spiking sharply.

What does this mean for students? States and universities all over the country are cancelling their student loan programs. Several private lenders are withdrawing from the market altogether. And even loan programs backed by federal government guarantors, like the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, a state institution, has announced it is abandoning its federal student loan program. State agencies all over, including Michigan, Montana, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Iowa, and more have announced cutbacks in their student loan programs in recent weeks.

Most students will not be applying for their loans for next year until this summer. So far, the federal government has been telling them they have nothing to worry about. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings told Congress on March 14 that students could just borrow directly from the Department of Education, through what is called the direct-loan program. When asked whether the Treasury

Department—the same one that is busy bailing out huge banks like Bear Sterns and funding the multi-billion dollar war in Iraq—is going to be able to come up with enough money to account for the loss of much of the state and private student loan industry, the Secretary merely replied that she would be ready.

But despite the rosy and calm picture presented by the Department of Education, the student loan industry continues to crumble, and students are bound to be affected by either enormous interest rates or no loans at all. Students from the states affected so far have already reported deciding to leave their four-year university for a community college, or having to drop out of school altogether. Many of these students have already completed some of their education and are already in debt. Leaving school early will leave them high debt burdens and few prospects for well paying jobs.

Although there have been many struggles over the rising cost of education over the years, the readily accessible access to funds through loans and the promise of a relatively high-paying job upon graduation have kept some of the broader layers of students out of the movement. Now, neither of those factors is a guarantee. With students over the summer facing the prospect of being locked out of access to higher education altogether, this economic crisis may quickly become a political one amongst youth. □

Militancy, solidarity grows as American Axle strike continues

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

Now in the fourth week of the workers' strike against American Axle, full bargaining teams for the United Auto Workers and American Axle haven't met for a week as of March 17. The UAW sent its local union bargainers back to their factories on March 10, and only the international negotiators have been talking since then.

About 3,600 workers at five American Axle plants in Michigan and New York went on strike Feb. 26 against the company's intentions to cut half their pay, replace their pensions with a 401-k, increase health care benefit costs, and demand other outrageous concessions which are an affront to the dignity and respect of workers everywhere.

The UAW has filed an unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board over the company's refusal to open its books for bargaining purposes. American Axle is a parts maker spun off by General Motors in 1994.

Due to the greed of American Axle and its Wall Street allies, GM has temporarily closed all or part of 30 plants in the U.S., affecting more than 37,000 workers and causing thousands more layoffs at other auto parts companies.

In addition, GM has shut down a truck plant in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, and has laid off 500 people at an engine factory in St. Catharines, Ontario. Layoffs are also taking place at several Canadian plants, the most recent on March 17 at a St. Thomas, Ontario, plant where 1,200 workers were furloughed. The Canadian Auto Workers union has been told a car factory in Oshawa could see cutbacks later this month if the strike continues.

Workers, not the bosses, arrested

On March 14 three strikers were handcuffed and cited for disorderly conduct at an American Axle plant in Detroit. The arrests were filmed by the corporate Channel 4 news and broadcast on the evening news with the message that the strik-



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK
Rosendo Delgado, a laid off Chrysler worker and organizer for Latinos Unidos, on the picket line March 16 supporting his sisters and brothers at American Axle.

ers were "violent." Along with the strikers being arrested, a phalanx of cops and their vehicles were shown menacing the picket lines. There was no coverage of the violence of American Axle bosses and allies in attempting to starve the workers and their loved ones into submission.

According to the cops and the company, the striking workers were throwing items at a truck. But sisters and brothers on the picket line said they were moving peaceably at a gate which has been held since the strike began when a truck from the plant attempted to drive through the moving picket line. The strikers, of course, responded angrily to almost being run down by the truck, and the driver taunted and threatened them. At this point the cops moved in and arrested the three strikers.

That same day, the Detroit News reported on a company claim that the Detroit plant was using management in production, inventory and shipping, and that parts were being shipped out only for non-GM customers.

Afterwards, a UAW regional office in Detroit issued a call for UAW workers at other plants to join American Axle workers on the picket lines.

"We expect this to be a long and drawn out strike," read an e-mail message from UAW Region 1A in Taylor, Mich. "Everyone must fight to protect these good-paying union jobs and our brothers and sisters."

But there's been no word on whether the UAW has demanded all charges be

dropped against the three arrested strikers. And, according to various sources, the international has told the locals to allow any trucks leaving the struck plants to go through.

Many striking workers and their allies are beginning to seriously discuss if there has to be a "long and drawn out strike" and what kind of fight is actually needed—considering this strike is within the critical supplier sector of the auto industry and is taking place within an overall domestic economic recession, compounded with the U.S. war on Iraq.

Anger—and a fight back mood—are rising in the rank and file at American Axle and elsewhere against the concessionary and labor-management partnership ideology of UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and his leadership team, which has resulted in nothing but horrendous setbacks for UAW workers at suppliers Delphi and Dana Corp., and at GM, Chrysler and Ford. Concessionary contracts at these corporations in the recent period have generally set a pattern for the bosses to attack all workers, as the UAW historically has been a trendsetter.

Some questions and observations now being discussed on the picket lines include:

With 37,000—and growing—fellow UAW sisters and brothers now idle because of the strike, isn't there an urgent need to mobilize these workers throughout the U.S. and Canada for plant defense at all five American Axle plants, but in particular the largest plant in Detroit with 1,900 workers? It'd be difficult for the state to physically move thousands of workers, if the union decided to enact a "nothing moves" (products or machines) rule, from a gate or an entire plant.

With support now growing for the strikers, wouldn't it be possible for all five locals—led by the rank-and-file strikers—to build labor-community solidarity committees that could build momentum and support for the striking workers and engage in plant defense?

Could these committees mobilize the striking workers and the communities they

live in around the slogan "A Job is A Right"? Could a one-day, labor-community, national or regional mobilization at a plant or plants be organized to win this strike?

How about a massive UAW organizing drive to organize the entire auto industry with a focus on nonunion American Axle plants, where the machines are being moved? How about an internationalist approach, working in partnership with unions in other countries where American Axle has plants?

The outcome of this strike will have historic implications either way for the UAW and all workers internationally—union and nonunion, and specifically workers of color, immigrants and women. If American Axle is able to succeed in its goals, other bosses will quickly move in on the entire working class in an effort to make even more profits off the backs of workers—with our standard of living plummeting to a worse state than it already is.

Thus, nothing short of an all-out, class-wide mobilization to win the strike at American Axle is called for. The bosses only stop their pursuit of profit anywhere around the globe when the workers draw the line and in one united voice say, "Enough!"

'Golpear a uno es golpear a todos' (If you beat one of us, you beat us all)

Numerous labor and community organizations continue to support the picket lines of all five locals on strike. Support resolutions, donations and provisions are received daily at the local's union halls.

In Hamtramck, Mich., where Local 235 is based, organizations such as the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice, Michigan Welfare Rights and Latinos Unidos have formally chosen times for picket line duty and give other support as well.

Nationally and internationally support is also growing. Other UAW members and locals as well as other unions throughout the Midwest and beyond have engaged in strike support.

Sandra Dinelle, a member of the Canadian Auto Workers Local 222, wrote to Workers World in response to this paper's previous coverage of the strike: "All I want to say is that we support you too. Great work guys. ... The pigs have had their nose in the feeding trough too long!! Be fair to the workers!! In solidarity, your Canadian Brother."

One of the most poignant messages of support to date was sent to Local 235 by the Student/Farmworker Alliance. The SFA works in alliance with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), an organization of mostly Latin@, Haitian, and Mayan Indian low-wage, superexploited immigrant workers based in Southwest Florida.

"We know that we must all stand together and fight against the corporate attack on our lives, our jobs, and our communities," reads the statement.

"We hope that this message provides a small boost to your efforts and your resolve, and we want you to know that we are with you, in spirit, on the picket line. If there is any other way we can support your struggle, please let us know."

Send donations/provisions and union/community support resolutions to:

UAW Local 235, 2140 Holbrook Ave., Hamtramck, MI 48212; 313-871-1190; adrianrking@hotmail.com or billalford74@yahoo.com

The writer's grandfather and great uncle participated as rank-and-file members in the 1954 to 1962 UAW Kohler strike in Kohler, Wis.

The Flint Sit-Down Strike

'Without the women that strike would have been lost'

By Martha Grevatt

"Old Joan of Arc has come back in half a hundred different bodies."

This was the opinion of a British MP, Ellen Wilkinson, speaking in Flint, Mich., in 1937 at a rally in solidarity with the famous sit-down strike. She was describing the women of that company town.

When the strike began at GM's two Fisher Body plants, more than 300 women sat down. Right away the male leadership—concerned about charges of immorality and probably overly protective—ordered them out of the plants. Nevertheless, women—not only those striking but the wives, daughters, mothers and sweethearts of the men in the plants—were indispensable to winning the strike.

First and foremost, the men had to be fed. It took a well-organized group of women to make a huge operation run smoothly—getting three square meals a day to the sit-downers for 44 days straight, and on top of that, feeding the

thousands who walked the picket lines.

The Women's Auxiliary, formed almost immediately after the strike began, also provided first aid and childcare for women pulling picket duty. The Auxiliary made house calls to make sure every family had enough to eat and could pay the bills. They visited wives who were threatening divorce and won them over to the union. A striker's wife, Genora Johnson, organized a children's picket line.

One woman who initially sat down with the men, Pat Wiseman, refused to cook. Instead she became a picket captain, never missing a day. (She later helped negotiate the first UAW contract with General Motors and also served as an organizer and shop steward.)

During a critical battle, "the Battle of Bulls' Run," the women showed unprecedented determination. "They had seen their men shot at, the police had tried to keep them from feeding their men, and they had fought in spite of tear gas, in spite of gunfire," wrote labor journalist and eyewitness observer Mary Heaton

Vorse, in "Labor's New Millions."

Johnson's immortal words in the heat of battle gave strength to the battered strikers: "Cowards! Cowards!" Johnson shouted at the police, "shooting unarmed and defenseless men!" She then called on the women to "break through those police lines and come down here and stand beside your husbands and your brothers and your uncles and your sweethearts." The women heeded her call. (Sol Dollinger and Genora Johnson Dollinger, "Not Automatic")

After that Johnson organized the Women's Emergency Brigade. Only women who felt they could respond immediately to an emergency were asked to take the Brigade's pledge. Four hundred women signed up. The Brigade demonstrated its fortitude whenever the police appeared poised to attack. The New York Times reported that strikers had "a large supply of blackjacks ... whittled down so that they can be swung or jabbed readily." In fact, the women had whittled the clubs

Continued on page 11

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Food service workers picket Wall St.

Hundreds of cafeteria and food service workers took their campaign for higher wages and improved benefits to two Wall Street financial institutions on March 5. Chanting, “Who’s in the kitchen? We don’t know. Aramark has got to go!” the workers rallied first at the Bank of New York and then marched to the Goldman Sachs headquarters.

Aramark is refusing to negotiate decent contracts with UNITE HERE, which represents about 20,000 Aramark employees nationally, including about 4,000 in the New York City area. The company had sales of \$12.4 billion last year. Not only is Goldman Sachs a client of Aramark, it’s also a part owner.

“There is no greater example of income inequality in American society than the Goldman Sachs cafeteria,” union President Bruce S. Raynor told the New York Times. (March 6) The average compensation for GS employees, including executives, was \$660,000 in 2007, while cafeteria employees were paid about \$21,000. That means GS staff made 31.4 times more than the cafeteria workers.

UNITE HERE represents about 30 percent of Aramark’s 165,000 hourly workers in the U.S. and Canada. Violence has escalated against Aramark workers who went on strike at Seneca College’s Markham campus, outside of Toronto, on March 10. To support those workers, sign a petition at www.unitehere.org.

Immigrant workers sue Gulf Coast firm

A group of immigrant workers from India and the United Arab Emirates have filed a class action suit against Signal International for luring them with false promises of permanent-resident status. They are also suing to stop being forced to live in rundown, unsanitary barracks and threatened for protesting.

The 500 welders and pipefitters, employed at the oil rig repair and construction company in Pascagoula, Miss., and Orange, Texas, were brought to the U.S. under the government’s temporary guest worker program in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

On March 6, about 100 of these workers walked off the job, holding picket signs reading “I Am A Man” and singing “We Shall Overcome” in the tradition of the civil rights movement. (Workday Minnesota, March 11)

At a rally in New Orleans on March 10, workers and their lawyers said the workers had given up their life savings and paid up to \$20,000 in immigration and travel fees after being assured that Signal would help them become permanent residents. The Southern Poverty Law Center and the New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice are just two of the groups helping the workers.

President Bush has proposed expanding the federal temporary guest worker program as one way to allow immigrants to work “legally” in this country. However, in the 1940s and 1950s the program refused to pay thousands of Mexican workers the wages they’d earned.

SF longshore and postal workers to protest war on May Day

To show their opposition to the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, delegates at the International Longshore & Warehouse Union’s annual meeting voted overwhelmingly to stop work during the day shift on May 1 at every West Coast port. The resolution also called for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the Middle East. (union press release, March 4)

Under the slogan “No peace, no work holiday,” the ILWU resolution also called on other unions, in addition to the AFL-CIO and Change to Win Coalition, to participate in similar events on May Day. In response to that appeal, the 2,700 members of Letter Carriers Branch 214 in San Francisco voted unanimously to observe two minutes of silence in all carrier stations at 8:15 a.m. on May 1 “in honor of International Workers Day and in solidarity with the ILWU stop-work action.” (union press release, March 6)

The ILWU has a long, proud history of opposing war. It was one of the first unions to call for an end to the Iraq war on May 1, 2003. Other anti-war actions have included Local 10 refusing to load bombs destined for the military dictatorship in Chile in 1978 and military cargo to the Salvadoran military dictatorship in 1981.

It’s important to note that the ILWU’s current contract expires on July 1 of this year.

Job discrimination complaints rise

Federal job discrimination complaints by workers against private employers rose a whopping 9 percent in 2007 alone. That’s the biggest annual increase since the early 1990s.

Data released on March 5 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission showed that accusations based on race, retaliation and sex were the most frequent forms of discrimination, with 82,792 complaints filed from Oct. 1, 2006, to Sept. 30, 2007, compared with 75,768 in budget year 2006. (New York Times, March 6) □

Amtrak workers finally get contracts

By Stephen Millies
District 1402, Transportation Communication Union, IAM

Fifteen thousand Amtrak workers are ratifying contracts after being stonewalled by management for eight years. Represented by a dozen unions, these railroad workers have been without agreements since Jan. 1, 2000. Management manipulated the Railroad Labor Act as an excuse not to bargain.

Bosses wanted to eliminate thousands of jobs by outsourcing. Those fired would have included 750 coach cleaners and 1,000 reservation clerks. Amtrak’s management sought to pull out of the railroad retirement system, threatening its solvency. They refused to consider back pay.

Even Bush’s handpicked Presidential Emergency Board found that management refused to negotiate in good faith. Surprisingly, they agreed to most of the union demands.

Oppressed women lead growth of union membership

By Beverly Hiestand

Union membership is now increasing after 25 years of decline, and women are instrumental to this significant turnaround. More than 201,000 women joined U.S. unions in 2007, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Women, who represent 44 percent of the workforce, are now nearly two-thirds of the new union members. While white men dominated the ranks of unions for so long, their numbers have been greatly diminished as their jobs have been replaced with technology or moved around the world to places where workers can be superexploited and paid a much lower percentage of the value of their labor.

However, capitalists cannot move those businesses that provide services out of the communities that need to access them. Unions have been focusing on these sites. Some of the biggest gains of union membership for women are in health care, childcare, educational support, government work, hotel, motel and food services. These are also low paying jobs where the most oppressed workers have been funneled because of racism, sexism and the loss of higher skilled, higher paying jobs.

While the proportion of union members who are white women increased from 29 percent to 33 percent since the mid-1980s, the proportion who are women of color increased by as much as 25 percent during the same period. While Black workers are the most unionized (14.3 percent), many nationalities can be found working together.

This change in the social character of the working class is now having a big impact on the consciousness and organization of working women. Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University notes research that says that elections won by unions tend to be highly concentrated in units with a majority of women. Women and workers of color, individually and as a group, have been found to be more likely to vote for unions. The highest win rates by far (82 percent) are in units with 75 percent or more women of color. (“Organizing Women: The Nature and Process of Union Organizing Efforts Among U.S. Women Workers Since the mid-1990’s,” 2003)

The gains of oppressed women in unions can be seen in the fact that in 2007 African-American women earned \$184 more a week and Latinas \$229 more than their nonunion counterparts. Union members are more likely than nonunion counterparts to have health and pension benefits and to receive paid holiday and vacations, as well as life and disability insurance.

These gains are now at great risk of being taken away. The ruling class of business owners and bankers has not been successful in turning around a huge economic crisis that threatens to take down

Wage increases will average about 35 percent over the life of these 10-year contracts that cover the period from Jan. 1, 2000, to Dec. 31, 2009. Workers will get 40 percent of their back pay—minus deductions for health insurance—a couple months after ratification.

But getting the remaining 60 percent depends upon Congress appropriating the money. This \$114 million is about what Bush spends during five hours of occupying Iraq. Any filibuster in Congress or Bush’s veto of our money should be answered by a labor holiday.

The Emergency Board did a rotten thing by limiting back pay to only those who were on the job as of Dec. 1, 2007. Workers who retired before then will get nothing.

One of these retired workers was 65-year-old Gary Graves. He was struck and killed by an Acela train on March 13 just north of the Providence, R.I., station while working for a private contractor. □

the whole U.S financial system. Hundreds of billions of dollars from government and private banks, all money made from the unpaid labor of the working class, has not been enough to reverse the crisis.

What becomes more obvious everyday is that the next huge pot of money they will go after will be tax money that is the basis for all the social programs workers have fought and died for over decades. In fact, the most likely programs that they will try to cut will be health, social security, pensions, unemployment insurance and other entitlement programs.

The same forces that have begun to change the union movement will be called upon to lead a broad struggle to push back this greedy cutthroat class of exploiters.

Hiestand is a retired RN and former union organizer and chief steward of CWA Local 1168.



Starbucks baristas win tip fight

As of this writing, San Diego Superior Court is deliberating the dollar amount of damages that coffee giant Starbucks must pay to 120,000 of its California baristas who, in a class action lawsuit, challenged its longtime policy of making workers share their tips with supervisors.

Former Starbucks barista Jou Chou originated the suit in 2004 on the basis that California labor law clearly forbids this practice, and the court ruled against Starbucks in February. Now it will decide the monetary settlement. According to Terry Chapko, one of the baristas’ lawyers, this settlement could be in the tens of millions of dollars.

There is evidence that the practice of having tip pooling include management is widespread, and the verdict in this case undoubtedly has many companies besides Starbucks worried. □

Fifth anniversary of war protested across the country

By LeiLani Dowell

As the fifth anniversary of the criminal U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan neared, tens of thousands hit the streets on Mar. 15 calling for an end to the war. In Los Angeles marchers targeted CNN at the corner of Sunset and Cahuenga chanting, “CNN, can’t you see? Put the peace march on TV!”

In Atlanta, 10 women from Grandmothers for Peace were arrested for showing up at a recruiting center and attempting to enlist.

Cristóbal Hinojosa, with Mexicanos en Acción, spoke at a militant anti-war rally in Houston. He blasted the U.S. government for five years of war in Iraq, which has taken the money so desperately need-

ed by working people in this country and murdered Iraqi people. “With the war on Iraq in the Middle East and a war on immigrants in this country, this government is not working in our interest,” Hinojosa said. “We need to get out of Iraq now!” The rally was sponsored by the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee and endorsed by Troops Out Now Coalition, Latin American Organization for Immigrant Rights, Houston Peace and Justice Center, International Socialist Organization, Justice for Palestinians, Progressive Action Alliance, the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement and the local Green Party.

Anti-war protesters numbering around 500 marched through an oppressed community in central San Diego. Speakers at



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

the rally demanded that the billions being spent on war be used instead to address human needs like health care, housing and the education budget crisis currently deepening in California. The International Action Center banner carried in the protest read, “End Colonial Occupation From Iraq to Palestine and Everywhere!”

The Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice sponsored a demonstration in downtown Detroit, demanding troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, money for cities not for war, stop the war on Palestine, end the siege of Gaza, and U.S. hands off Iran. MECAWI anti-war organizers were joined by Palestinian and Arab activists, Green

Party members, youth from Lansing fighting foreclosures and evictions, members of the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, students from Detroit’s Cass Tech High School and others. Demonstrations also took place in Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids, Mich.

In Europe, protestors marched in Glasgow, London, Stockholm, Oslo and many other cities. In Canada, where the parliament extended that country’s military commitment to the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, demonstrators took to the streets in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal.

Cheryl LaBash, Dianne Mathiowetz, Alan Pollock, Gloria Rubac and Gloria Verdieu contributed to this report.



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN



WW PHOTO: J. LA RIVA

Winter soldier hearings

Troops confirm U.S. war crimes

Continued from page 1

Hurd told how the calloused attitude toward Iraqi civilians worsened as the occupation dragged on. “Over time, as the absurdity of war set in, individuals from my unit indiscriminately opened fire at vehicles driving down the wrong side of the road. People in my unit would later brag about it. I remember thinking how appalled I was that we were laughing at this, but that was the reality.”

Jason Wayne Lemieux, a Marine, served three tours in Iraq. He told how the rules of engagement were changed each time to encourage even more slaughter of civilians. By his second tour, if a person “was carrying a shovel, or standing on a rooftop talking on a cell phone, or being out after curfew, they were to be killed. I can’t tell you how many people died because of this. By my third tour, we were told to just shoot people, and the officers would take care of us.”

One Marine veteran, machine gunner John Michael Turner, pulled the medals

off his shirt and threw them to the floor as he testified about shooting down people he knew were innocent. “I want to say I’m sorry for the hate and destruction that I and others have inflicted on innocent people,” he concluded. “It is not okay, and this is happening, and until people hear what is going on, this is going to continue. I am no longer the monster that I once was.”

The event was streamed live over the Internet but was boycotted by almost the entire U.S. corporate media. It was well organized, with logistical and support staff provided by Veterans for Peace and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Mental health and legal professionals were available at all times.

While most of the panelists were IVAW members, expert witnesses also testified. Iraqi civilians, including refugees, described their experiences with the occupation through detailed interviews that had been video recorded in Iraq, Jordan and Syria.

IVAW Advisory Board member Dr. Dahlia Wasfi raised the occupation of Palestine

IVAW is a growing organization with over 800 members. The leadership is diverse: the chair of its Board of Directors was born in Nicaragua and the co-chair is African-American. The treasurer and executive director are women. The group is LGBT-friendly.

Most members come from the enlisted ranks and are under 30 years old. They are from both urban and rural areas. Many were on track to be career noncommissioned officers—the foundation of any military organization. Their membership in IVAW is a major defeat for the U.S. imperialist war machine.

Readers are urged to check out the hearings and testimonies at www.ivaw.org.

The writer is a member of Veterans For Peace—Chapter 021 and was part of the support staff at the Winter Soldier hearing.

Campaign for

A campaign on behalf of more than 530 known missing persons in Pakistan was announced March 17 in Brooklyn, N.Y., at a press conference organized by the Pakistan-U.S. Freedom Forum. Attorney Omer Khwaja, executive director of the Campaign to Restore Democracy to Pakistan, described the efforts of many in Pakistan to locate relatives missing since Gen. Pervez Musharraf’s crackdown last year on the democracy movement. “We cannot leave these courageous families rudderless as the Pakistani politicians who won last month’s elections waffle over when, how, and in what form to restore democratic values to Pakistan,” said Khwaja. “Our campaign has taken the first step towards our goal to hold high-ranking officials accountable for the horrors that have occurred under their watch.”

After the press conference, author and historian Tariq Ali spoke to a gathering of close to 100 in the same hall about the

New unity in Palestinian struggle

By Sara Flounders

Unable to defeat the Palestinian people's determination to assert their rights and sovereignty after 60 years of the most brutal occupation and expropriation of land, the entire U.S.-Israeli strategy for years has been based on exacerbating every division, every difference in the Palestinian struggle.

In an effort to set one group against the other they have used classic imperialist tactics, such as imposing collective punishment upon the entire civilian population in an effort to heighten internal tensions and break the determination to resist. This is combined with ruthless repression, assassinations and kidnappings of more revolutionary and militant forces; bribes, meager incentives and false promises to more moderate groups and individuals; and the sowing of suspicion and disinformation all the while and at every turn.

However, events this week demonstrate that such ruthless repression can divide a movement, but can also be the source of a new level of unity. In one outrageous act, Israeli forces have succeeded in uniting the Palestinian movement in a way it has not been in years.

Outrage creates new unity

On March 12 in broad daylight, Israeli Special Forces gunned down four popular Palestinian leaders sitting in a car in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. They ridled the car with more than 500 bullets.

The four men—Mohammad Shehadeh, a leader of Islamic Jihad; Ahmed Balboul, a local commander of Al Aksa Brigades aligned with Fatah; and Issa Marzouq and Imad Al-Kamal of Islamic Jihad—were in Bethlehem meeting with other Fatah activists in preparation for Fatah's sixth movement conference.

The four were considered local heroes who had long evaded Israeli capture. Shehadeh ran in the Palestinian elections and received more than 7,000 votes. Marzouq was voted onto the Bethlehem city council on an Islamic Jihad ticket in 2005.

Again and again Israel has attempted to destroy all forms of Palestinian self-government. More than half the members of the Palestinian parliament are today in Israeli jails. Many others have been assassinated.

In an interview earlier on the day of the attack, the resistance leaders had visited the offices of Ma'an News Agency. Shehadeh had said, regarding Israeli promises of amnesty: "The Israeli occupa-



tion doesn't want to arrest us. Really, they want to assassinate us."

A week before Shehadeh's assassination Israeli forces had totally destroyed his home. Now, in a show of unity, Hamas, Fatah and the Lebanese resistance organization Hezbollah have all pledged to defy Israel and rebuild it.

The funeral in Bethlehem, a Muslim and Christian city, for the four veteran fighters was a mass outpouring of tens of thousands of Palestinians and a general strike that united all the Palestinian political forces. The flags of Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine were flown together and Shehadeh's body was draped in the flag of Hezbollah.

The March 16 London Observer, in an article entitled "Militant's death unites Bethlehem—Stalled peace process fuels support for Hizbollah," described the funeral. "School principals, teachers and students from the Bethlehem School, the Catholic School and the Greek Orthodox School paraded to the mourning tent outside the church chanting and waving placards praising the Palestinian 'martyr.'"

The major corporate media all expressed their concern at the overwhelming unity of political groups and especially at the rage of Fatah forces, which had remained committed to nego-

tiations with Israel, even during the full scale attacks on Hamas in Gaza.

Collective punishment after failed divide-and-conquer tactics

In past months Zionist efforts at playing one group against the other reached a new level of intensity. When, in a democratic election in January 2006, the Palestinian population dared to overwhelmingly elect Hamas—the organization more intransigent to Zionism and imperialism—the Israeli occupation, with active U.S. participation, took more extreme measures.

The April 2008 issue of Vanity Fair magazine describes U.S. efforts to organize a coup to overthrow the Hamas government, including the funneling of arms and funds to Fatah forces, whose present leadership is preferred by the U.S. over Hamas. Palestinian tax revenues were withheld and international aid was choked off.

When U.S.-backed efforts to foment a civil war in Gaza failed nine months ago, and Hamas took total control there, Zionist forces resorted to the most extreme form of collective punishment. Even the most basic civilian necessities—medicine and fuel for electricity, heat and cooking—were cut off.

Gaza is home to more than one million Palestinian refugees. On an almost daily basis Israeli forces have bombed civilian targets in the area from U.S. supplied jet aircraft and attack helicopters. Tanks routinely roll into populated centers and thousands of Palestinian leaders have been kidnapped. Hundreds have been targeted with assassination.

In early March a new Israeli offensive in Gaza resulted in more than 120 Palestinian deaths and hundreds of injuries. Palestinian forces have continued to show defiance and intransigence by firing rockets over the Israeli-built wall of Gaza into Israel.

The assassination of the four leaders came a day after it seemed that Hamas in Gaza had agreed to a cease-fire. It confirmed once again that Israel is opposed to any form of peace. It will use every opportunity to further enflame the repression and intensify the occupation.

U.S. and Israeli forces claimed that they would continue to negotiate with and provide resources to Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of Fatah. The promise, raised once again at the November 2007 Annapolis meeting, was that talks would lead to a

Palestinian ministate under some form of limited Palestinian sovereignty.

These talks have now lasted more than 15 years, since the 1993 Oslo Accords promised a Palestinian state within three to five years. During them, Israeli land confiscations and the building of formidable settlement complexes have continued. So has the building of hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks, miles of separate roads and massive three- and four-story walls snaking through and around hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns.

Throughout this brutal process the Zionist government has had the unconditional diplomatic, political, economic and military support of U.S. imperialism. No matter how outrageous the Israeli repression, it is always followed by new demands on Palestinians to make new concessions to prove their commitment to a "peace process."

This year, Israel granted a much-publicized amnesty to 178 political prisoners. But in the same period they have kidnapped another 642 Palestinians in the West Bank. Targeted assassinations in both the West Bank and in Gaza are a daily occurrence. More than 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners fill Israeli jails.

The International Middle East Media Center (www.imemc.org), in their "This Week in Palestine" report, said Israeli forces had invaded the West Bank 47 times and kidnapped 78 Palestinians during the same week as the latest assassinations.

In an interview with Ma'an during Bethlehem's Christmas Eve celebrations, Shehadeh, radiating confidence and smiling, said: "The Palestinian people are capable of raising the flag of liberty and completing their mission. Israel has to realize that military occupation of Palestine does not solve its problems, either now or in the future." Asked why he rejected amnesty in favor of continuing with the armed struggle, he said, "It is revolutionaries who have the right to give amnesty to the occupation, and not the opposite."

During these same holiday celebrations, Israeli InfoLive.TV spoke to Shehadeh, who appears on camera armed and surrounded by many smiling civilians in Bethlehem's Manger Square. He said, "The Palestinian people and their resistance have survived scores of years." Asked if he had a message to the Palestinian people, Shehadeh said: "To love each other and to unite. The day of victory will arrive no matter how distant. We will win." □

Pakistani missing persons



collaboration between the CIA and a long string of military dictatorships in Pakistan. He stressed the need for land reform as well as civilian democratic rule.

From right to left in photo are Sara

Flounders of the International Action Center, Omer Khwaja, progressive attorney Lynne Stewart and Comrade Shahid of the Pakistan-U.S.A. Freedom Forum.

—Report & photo by Deirdre Griswold

WW in 1968

French student strike sparked great proletarian rebellion

By V. Copeland
May 23, 1968

The French railroad worker who declared, “The students were the fuse; we (the workers) were the powder keg,” said a revolutionary mouthful last week.

The explosion in France was a big one, so big that it jarred the whole repressive apparatus of a formerly confident ruling class and raised the question of which class should have state power in a dramatic way that everybody could understand.

It began spontaneously, the workers taking fire from the students and against the will of their conservative leaders, transforming episodic although fiercely militant actions into a nationwide general strike.

Beginning with the Sud Aviation plant in Nantes, where they welded the plant gates shut on May 14, and leaping to the complex of Renault auto plants around Paris, where the workers ran up the Red Flag, by May 20 over 6 million workers had tied up the whole of France.

With hundreds of thousands of students occupying every major university in the country and the majority of the minor ones, as well as broad action by still more hundreds of thousands of high school pupils, the French working class seized and occupied scores, possibly hundreds of plants. They often kept their bosses, the executive servants of the ruling class, imprisoned as they insisted on wage increases, shorter hours, etc.

Premier Georges Pompidou, acting in President de Gaulle’s absence, implicitly threatened the use of troops.

But troops could not be moved on the closed-down railroads. Nor could they use the telegraph or telephone for communications. Were they to move in jeeps and tanks from their bases, it was questionable where they would concentrate their attack, since the strike hit every city.

Mines, mills, steel and auto plants, rubber, textile, chemical and every industry imaginable were on strike. Finally, the army itself was made up of the brothers and sons of the strikers. Unlike the National Guard regiments of Jersey City being sent to Newark, or white troops being used against Black Americans, the French Army was not necessarily “reliable.” It was almost a classical revolutionary situation.

And yet as late as May 17, Georges Seguy, Secretary General of the CP-controlled General Confederation of Labor (CGT), stated specifically that he was against a general strike!

But the general strike was already on (later to be rubber-stamped by Seguy) and it had already shown its revolutionary possibilities.

Pompidou proved this when he accused the movement (on May 16) of trying to “destroy the nation and the very foundation of our society.”

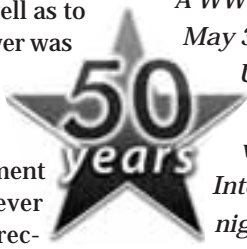
By May 23 nearly 10 million workers were on strike—a fifth of the total population. It was as if 40 million U.S. workers (there are only 17 million organized in labor unions) had downed their tools to bring the country to a standstill.

The workers’ leadership was compelled to supervise the flow of food and vital services in the interest of the very workers who were striking. This underlined the revolutionary character of the action and

emphasized to the leaders as well as to the ranks that the essential power was really in their own hands.

The bourgeoisie was helpless.

A greater portion of government workers was on strike than ever before in history and an unprecedented number of farm workers as well. White collar and blue collar, all joined to show that labor was everything and the ruling class was superfluous.



THE REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION IN FRANCE

Which Road for the Mass Struggle?—To a New Bourgeois Coalition or Workers’ Power?

By Sam Marcy
May 22, 1968

There can be absolutely no doubt that as of this writing, France is in the throes of one of the deepest and most profound of revolutionary crises. And France, it must be remembered, has had more of them than any other Western nation to date.

What gives this truly great revolutionary upheaval exceptional and extraordinary significance is that it has the very real potential—more than previous crises—not only of ousting the de Gaulle government, but of overturning the entire rotten edifice on which the French capitalist system is built.

Such an event, of course, would not only change the character of the international situation, but would also light the flames of a new revolutionary conflagration that inevitably would sweep all of Western Europe. This in turn would surely mean a forging of the bonds of class solidarity between the western proletariat and the revolutionary liberation struggles waged by the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

These bonds, first forged by the victorious October socialist revolution in Russia and the Western proletarian uprisings that followed, were brutally severed by the triumph of opportunism and liquidationism which now hold sway in the USSR, Eastern Europe and most of the CPs.

When one considers the rising tide of rebellion in America today, along with the momentous resurgence in Europe, it is inconceivable that the revolutionary contagion would not also greatly affect the mood as well as the direction of the rank-and-file white American worker and cement a genuine alliance with the Black liberation movement against the U.S. imperialist Establishment.

The above prognosis, our cynics will tell you—and they are an international breed—is a revolutionary pipe dream that won’t come true. Perhaps. It is instructive to remember, however, that these very same cynics were telling us only yesterday how stable, prosperous and safe from any revolutionary disorders capitalist France was under de Gaulle, and that the French workers had become so thoroughly bourgeois that they were beyond revolutionary redemption.

Now, it is plain to see that the French working class, in alliance with the revolu-

Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper’s content over the past half century. Below are excerpts from two articles in 1968.

A WW article by F. Reed explains that the 1968 French uprising began on May 3, when several hundred students protested the closing of Nanterre University and the jailing of their leaders for an action asserting student rights and reform of the archaic university system. They were attacked, tear-gassed and arrested by cops called out by the Interior Minister, Fouchet. Clashes spread in the university area and by nightfall 500 had been arrested and 100 injured. In the following days thousands of high school and university students and teachers went on strike throughout the country, protests were held throughout the city and barricades set up. A joint student union-workers’ union call went out for a general strike on May 13. A million people were estimated to have participated.

It is as though the workers in a certain factory came to the conclusion that their situation was so intolerable that they demanded an immediate raise in pay just at a time when the boss had decided that what was needed was a further cut in pay instead. Economically speaking, this is the situation that prevails on a nationwide scale in France.

Gaullist economists, radical and bourgeois politicians and the misleaders of labor have all done their share in hiding the true anatomy of class relations in present-day France. That is what is so incredibly wonderful about the manner in which the French working class has put an end to this gross deception. In no other way could it have been brought to the attention of world public opinion, or the French public generally.

As has happened so many times in history, it took the students to spark the movement, but the students alone, no matter how heroic and self-sacrificing, cannot accomplish the fundamental social change that the workers can, because it is only the workers who operate the basic machinery of society. The student struggle is a symptom of the developing general struggle. ...

But now the question is: how can the struggle be resolved? By parliamentary trickery? By a new bourgeois coalition of left-wing bourgeois politicians in alliance with the CP and the SP a la Popular Front days?

This is to tread the old beaten path, the path of treason to the French working class. A call for a so-called referendum embodying some token concessions while maintaining the old system would be a fraudulent device no less vicious than the corrupt political maneuvering of the National Assembly. ...

The alternative that is needed is a national organization of Workers’ Councils, Peasant Councils, Poor Peoples’ Councils and Student Councils. That is the real alternative to the discredited National Assembly.

That would be a true Popular Front of the masses, a true coalition of the various strata of the oppressed and exploited peoples—and not a coalition with the bourgeoisie, as [the French CP leader] Waldeck Rochet proposes. That would be Dual Power, and only “dual” as long as the old regime of the exploiters could survive it.

The masses have to establish independent organs of power to validate the possession of the means of production that are presently in their hands and take over the political destiny of the country. Only in this way will they put an end to the reign of the monopolies which breed poverty, reaction and imperialist war. □

tionary students and other social groupings, have what amounts to de facto power in their hands. They have not only paralyzed the economic life of the country—they virtually have it in their hands.

The real issue is whether what they have in their hands will be returned to the absentee owners. This class of ruthless exploiters, a tiny minority of the French people, is now literally at the mercy of an aroused and revolutionary people.

And yet, the ruling classes of Europe and America, while greatly alarmed at the magnitude of the social and political upheaval, seem confident that even if the de Gaulle government is eventually forced out, a new set of leftist politicians will take over, grant a minimum of concessions, a maximum of false promises, and through the medium of the French CP leadership, return the plants back to their “rightful” owners and the workers to exploitation. ...

It is said that all the French workers want is the rectification of some grievances and that their demands are only economic and do not go beyond the limits of the present bourgeois order of society. True enough. But this is the least of all the significant factors in the situation. The demands of the Russian workers and peasants of 1917 were even more modest. Their slogan was bread, land and peace.

Any important strike is an embryo revolution. That is a basic teaching of Leninism.

The scope and breadth of the current strike in France, encompassing as of today eight to ten million workers, poses a truly revolutionary threat to the existing social order. It is not the modest character of the demands that is decisive, but the manner in which the workers seek to get them achieved. And the manner in which they have gone about it thus far, with speed and with such utter spontaneity, makes it truly characteristic of a revolutionary situation.

However, no revolutionary situation can be considered fully as such unless one also takes into account the situation of the capitalist class and of the reciprocal relationships between all the classes of contemporary French society. The French ruling class is confronted by a series of economic demands just at a moment in its history when the political representatives of the ruling class were seeking to further encroach on the living standards of the people.

Tibet and the March 10 commemoration of the CIA’s 1959 ‘uprising’

By Gary Wilson

Has Tibet become the front line of a new national liberation struggle? Or is something else happening there?

The U.S. news media are filled with stories about events unfolding in Tibet. Each news report, however, seems to include a note that much of what they are reporting cannot be confirmed. The sources of the reports are shadowy and unknown. If past practice is any indicator, it is likely that the U.S. State Department and the CIA are their primary sources.

One frequently quoted source is John Ackerly. Who is Ackerly? As president of the International Campaign for Tibet, he and his group appear to work closely with the U.S. government, both the State Department and Congress, as part of its operations concerning Tibet. During the Cold War, Ackerly’s Washington-based job was to work with “dissidents” in Eastern Europe, particularly Romania in 1978-80.

A private international security agency in Washington, Harbor Lane Associates, lists Ackerly and the International Campaign for Tibet as its clients, along with former CIA Director and U.S. President George H.W. Bush and former Pentagon chief William Cohen.

AP, Reuters and the other Western news agencies all quote Ackerly as a major source for exaggerated reports about the clashes that have just occurred in Tibet. For example, MSNBC on March 15 reported:

“John Ackerly, of the International Campaign for Tibet, a group that supports demands for Tibetan autonomy, said in an e-mailed statement he feared ‘hundreds of

Tibetans have been arrested and are being interrogated and tortured.’”

Qiangba Puncog, a Tibetan who is chair of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Government, described the situation quite differently at a March 17 press briefing in Beijing.

According to china.org.cn, China’s state Web site, the Tibetan leader said that allies of the exiled Dalai Lama on March 14 “engaged in reckless beating, looting, smashing and burning and their activities soon spread to other parts of the city. These people focused on street-side shops, primary and middle schools, hospitals, banks, power and communications facilities and media organizations. They set fire to passing vehicles, they chased after and beat passengers on the street, and they launched assaults on shops, telecommunication service outlets and government buildings. Their behavior has caused severe damage to the life and property of local people, and seriously undermined law and order in Lhasa.

“Thirteen innocent civilians were burned or stabbed to death in the riot in Lhasa on March 14, and 61 police were injured, six of them seriously wounded,’ said Qiangba Puncog.

“Statistics also show that rioters set fire to more than 300 locations, including residential houses and 214 shops, and smashed and burned 56 vehicles. ...

“Qiangba Puncog also claimed that security personnel did not carry or use any lethal weapons in dealing with the riot last Friday. ...

“The violence was the result of a conspiracy between domestic and overseas groups that advocate ‘Tibet independence,’ according to Qiangba Puncog. ‘The Dalai clique masterminded, planned

and carefully organized the riot.’

“According to Qiangba Puncog, on March 10, 49 years ago, the slave owners of old Tibet launched an armed rebellion aimed at splitting the country. That rebellion was quickly quelled. Every year since 1959, some separatists inside and outside China have held activities around the day of the rebellion. ...

“Any secessionist attempt to sabotage Tibet’s stability will not gain people’s support and is doomed to fail, he said.”

Meeting in New Delhi

Whatever is taking place in Tibet has long been in preparation. A conference was held in New Delhi, India, last June by “Friends of Tibet.” It was described as a conference for the breakaway of Tibet.

The news site phayul.com reported at the time that the conference was told “how the Olympics could provide the one chance for Tibetans to come out and protest.” A call was issued for worldwide protests, a march of exiles from India to Tibet, and protests within Tibet—all tied to the upcoming Beijing Olympics.

This was followed by a call this past January for an “uprising” in Tibet, issued by organizations based in India. The news report from Jan. 25 said that the “Tibetan People’s Uprising Movement” was established Jan. 4 to focus on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The beginning date for the “uprising” was to be March 10.

At the time the call was issued, U.S. Ambassador to India David Mulford was meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. U.S. Undersecretary of State Paula Dobriansky made a similar visit to Dharamsala last November. Dobriansky is also a member of the neocon Project for a New American Century. She has been involved in the so-called color revolutions in Eastern Europe.



Qiangba Puncog

Phayul.com reports that the Tibet “Uprising” group’s statement says they are acting “in the spirit of the 1959 Uprising.”

The 1959 uprising

Knowing more about the 1959 “uprising” might help in understanding today’s events in Tibet.

In 2002 a book titled “The CIA’s Secret War in Tibet” was published by the University Press of Kansas. The two authors—Kenneth Conboy of the Heritage Foundation and James Morrison, an Army veteran trainer for the CIA—proudly detail how the CIA set up and ran Tibet’s so-called resistance movement. The Dalai Lama himself was on the CIA payroll and approved the CIA’s plans for the armed uprising.

The CIA put the Dalai Lama’s brother, Gyalto Thodup, in charge of the bloody 1959 armed attack. A contra army was trained by the CIA in Colorado and then dropped by U.S. Air Force planes into Tibet.

The 1959 attack was a CIA planned and organized coup attempt, much like the later Bay of Pigs invasion of socialist Cuba. The purpose was to overthrow the existing Tibetan government and weaken the Chinese Revolution while tying the people of Tibet to U.S. imperialist interests. What does that say about today’s March uprising, that’s done in the same spirit? □

Shift to the left in French local votes

By G. Dunkel

Nobody disputes that the UMP, the right-wing governing party, suffered a major defeat on March 16 in the local elections held all over France. Marseilles was the only large city where the UMP kept its control, but even that control was diminished. Of the thirty other large cities where the right confronted a “left” party, the right lost.

The dominant left party in France is the Socialist Party—which is hardly more left than the Democratic Party is here—but the French Communist Party has traditionally had a strong implantation on the local level. Other parties which present a more anti-capitalist program, like Workers Struggle (LO) and the League for Communist Revolution (LCR), also have a noticeable presence.

Although the left combined for this string of victories, the percentage of votes it obtained was not that dominant.

The answer to why such a major shift in electoral support for Nicolas Sarkozy’s UMP took place has a number of factors. Some of his supporters were perturbed by his divorce and remarriage, conducted in a glare of publicity, with no concern for propriety. A few months later Sarkozy made an extremely crude and sexist comment to someone who refused to shake his hand, and this was caught on the French version of YouTube.

Regarding political program, other voters might have been objecting to Sarkozy’s interventions in Chad with the Zoe’s Ark kidnapping, along with the military intervention defending the French puppet in early February, followed up by French special forces getting caught well inside the Sudan.

Sarkozy has also promised to send French troops to reinforce Canadian troops in Afghanistan. He has taken other foreign policy steps that indicated that France was now following the lead of U.S. imperialism more consistently in its foreign entanglements.

Workers overall and residents of the predominantly West African and North African suburbs, where social problems and inequalities are particularly harsh, were turned off by Sarkozy’s attacks on pensions, medical care and workers rights under the guise of improving France’s “competitivity.”

The fascist-right party called the National Front at most got one seat on a regional council.

In the Spanish state a week earlier, the PSOE—Spanish socialists—won the national election for a new parliament with 43.64 percent of the votes as against 40.12 percent for the right-wing Popular Party. While the PSOE didn’t get a majority, which means it will have to set up a coalition government, it did get five seats more than in the last election. □

Laura Bush in Haiti: grandiose lies amid misery

By G. Dunkel

Laura Bush swung by Haiti for a few hours on March 13 on her way to Mexico. She stayed in her car or in a building for most of the few hours she spent there promoting the Bush administration’s interventions on poverty and AIDS.

The Bush administration has been promoting Haiti as a success story, crediting U.S. contributions of some hundreds of millions of dollars for the success. But the Bush regime doesn’t mention that almost all these millions were used to pay for the military occupation and repression and for the coup the U.S. organized against the democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, on Feb. 29, 2004.

“Haiti has been a very important aspect of what we consider to be President Bush’s accomplishments in the region,” Thomas Shannon, assistant secretary of state for western hemisphere affairs, told the Miami Herald.

Laura Bush followed up with the message, “I want to encourage especially the people of Haiti and the Haitian Americans ... in Florida and all over the United States to stay involved in Haiti, to reach out as individuals ... to make sure this success continues.” She told the Miami Herald.

The region of Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, where she stayed was pretty much

closed off to car and foot traffic by the security forces of MINUSTAH (the U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti) and the Haitian National Police while she was in town.

Laura Bush actually met with three young HIV-positive adults during her morning visit to GHESKIO, an AIDS clinic near the embassy. She used the opportunity to call for more funding for President Bush’s AIDS program.

Bush also met with a group of HIV-positive women who had received business loans through GHESKIO, Haiti’s largest treatment center for sexually transmitted diseases. GHESKIO stands for the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi’s Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections.

The loans range from \$13.50 to \$1,300 and are allegedly designed to promote economic independence.

It was typical Bush to focus on individual responses to a vast social problem, giving the minimum in financial aid in the face of a vast bucket of misery, much as the administration did in New Orleans. Haitian writer Mona Peralte points out that Laura Bush could save “many more thousands of lives by inviting George W. to stop bombing thousands of innocent civilian victims in Iraq and Afghanistan and to cease those neoliberal economic diktats on poor countries that cause mass hunger in poor countries.” □



Class and racism

It is seldom that the great, multinational working class in the United States gets much recognition in the mass media. Virtually nothing is said about what all workers have in common and what therefore makes them a class: the exploitation of their labor by huge conglomerations of capital, which now straddle the globe.

Instead, those who sell their ability to labor in exchange for wages—whether they sweat in the hot fields, dig in the mines, change sheets and bedpans, or battle a computer all day—have been defined as consumers, or constituents, or taxpayers if they had jobs. And if they got relatively decent pay with benefits—a shrinking number—they weren’t even allowed to be in the working class anymore. Especially if they were white, they were described as “middle class.”

But have you noticed that lately workers are being taken note of in the columns of the media pundits—and specifically “white workers”? How did they make this amazing comeback?

“White workers” are being mentioned in connection with the Democratic presidential primaries, and especially the campaign of Barack Obama. It is being broadly hinted that he might not make it because of the racism of “white workers.”

This is indeed turning reality on its head.

It was not white workers who introduced slavery into this country. It was white merchant capitalists and their customers in the slave trade: rich land owners who didn’t want to pay wages to white farm workers. They jumped at the chance of super-exploiting a people stolen in the millions from their homeland and brought in chains to be sold as chattel, with no human, social or political rights at all; who could be whipped, starved and beaten until they either obeyed their “masters” or died.

It was not white workers but Northern industrial capitalists who, after winning the Civil War, allowed the restoration to power of the Southern aristocracy and the return of a form of semi-slavery with the sharecropping system—again, to the benefit of the rich land-owning class there. It was not white workers but white bosses who tried to defeat the early unions in this country by devising strategies to pit white against Black in hiring and breaking strikes.

It is to Obama’s great credit that he has rejected this insidious effort to blame racism on white workers. In his

remarkable speech on race on March 17, he discussed both the righteous anger in the Black community against all the many legacies of slavery that still exist and also the fears of whites who are losing their jobs. He talked about how conservative politicians and commentators exploit those fears on behalf of a “corporate culture” that has led to “a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many.” He called on the African-American community to continue to “insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life” but also to bind “our particular grievances—for better health care, and better schools, and better jobs—to the larger aspirations of all Americans—the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man who’s been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family.”

It was a remarkable talk because it was made within the framework of a political system shaped and dominated by the super-rich U.S. imperialist ruling class, which has owned both major political parties lock, stock and barrel for generations. It was not a break with this system, but it was a break with the unwritten rules of what has been considered acceptable speech within this system.

That Obama said he would not disown the Rev. Jeremiah Wright—although he did criticize his views—is another break with the unwritten rules, and one for which he will surely be castigated in the months to come. Obama was supposed to kneel down before the 24/7 blitzkrieg of denunciations that have streamed out of the televisions, radios and print media ever since Fox aired a segment of Wright’s sermons. Instead, he used the attacks to explain in his speech why there is such pent-up anger in the Black community. That it was Fox-TV, the pit bull of billionaire Rupert Murdoch, which began this racist attack on Obama just proves once again that racism comes from, and is constantly being reinforced by, the rich ruling class, not the white workers. It is fear that white workers may be won over to Obama—and eventually to a united struggle with Black workers—that has sent the right wing of the ruling class ballistic.

As the U.S. lurches into an economic crisis of unfathomable depth, nothing is more important than building Black-Brown-white unity to fight in the interests of the millions of workers who are being ripped off by this profit-mad capitalist system. □

Cynthia McKinney election campaign

Re: Larry Holmes’ talk at a Feb. 9 Workers World Party meeting in Detroit on “Globalization, Economic Crisis & Obama.” See www.workers.org for excerpts.

Larry Holmes makes many important observations on the 2008 elections, including on the importance of understanding Barack Obama’s campaign. He points out the bourgeois character of the campaign. It is also important to realize that Obama is stealing some of the energy and enthusiasm of people to get rid of Bush and his policies; energy and enthusiasm that belong to progressives. The corporate media are doing everything they can to paint Obama as the alternative of hope and hide the truth about his platform and about other, real alternatives.

One thing that Larry missed was that Cynthia McKinney, former Democratic congresswoman from Georgia, is campaigning to win the Green Party nomination for president. She has campaigned across the country and participated in the Green Party primaries, including in California and Illinois where she won several thousand votes and convention delegates. If she gets the nomination, she will be on the ballot as the GP candidate in at least 21 states. She is, among other things, solidly against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for single payer health insurance, for reparations for slavery, for a much higher minimum wage and immigrant rights.

While readers of Workers World may not agree with the whole GP platform or the McKinney campaign, she represents a clear alternative to the twin parties of war at home and abroad. Her historic campaign, as a Black woman running for president in a third party bid, is an opportunity for all progressives to not only vote for her, but encourage others to join her effort, to run for local offices. Her campaign gives poor, working class people in particular, as well as students and middle class people, the opportunity to help build the movement in the streets by supporting a progressive independent alternative in the 2008 elections.

Her website is www.runcynthiarun.org.

**In solidarity,
— Fred Vitale
State Chairperson,
Green Party of Michigan**

The Atlanta tornado: Class character of a natural disaster

With 135-mile-an-hour winds on the evening of March 14, a tornado tore through a 6-mile swath of Atlanta starting with African-American neighborhoods such as Vine City, west of downtown; barreling through well-known streets, where some of the city’s most prestigious buildings are located; and finally devastating another historic Intown community—once home to mill workers, now a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

Thousands of images have appeared on newscasts showing the damaged CNN and Georgia World Congress Center building, the cars buried under bricks and twisted metal and the famous hotels with their windows blown out. The Atlanta media have also extensively covered the collapse of a section of the 100-year-old mill in the Cabbagetown area that was recently converted into lofts. There have been numerous stories about the more than 20 bungalows and shotgun-style houses originally built for mill workers, crushed by massive oak trees.

However, very little media attention has been given to the tremendous devastation in the Vine City area, an economically struggling neighborhood where many more homes were destroyed or seriously damaged and where a large apartment complex had its roof torn off, forcing dozens of families to escape with their lives and nothing else.

This part of the city surrounds the street where, just over a year ago, an Atlanta undercover drug squad burst into the home of an elderly woman, Ms. Kathryn Johnston, on the basis of a phony “no knock” warrant and killed her in a flurry of gunshots. While many of the homes in this community are owned by senior citizens, there is also a lot of rental property.

The Georgia insurance commissioner had announced that damages will run upwards of \$250 million. It is not clear if this estimate includes any replacement of the homes of working and poor people. One can anticipate that low-wage workers, retired people and renters will not have sufficient insurance to cover their losses.

The major downtown businesses have assured their clientele that everything will be back to normal as soon as possible. But does their assurance include the thousands of restaurant workers, hotel housekeeping staffs and other service workers who won’t be getting paychecks for weeks or longer while the reconstruction takes place? And what provision is there for those whose homes will now be torn down and most likely not rebuilt, unless by developers of unaffordable housing?

**— Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta**

Buckley & HIV

Regarding your article on the death of Wm. F. Buckley (March 13), I still have somewhere the 1986 New York Times article about tattooing people with HIV written by Buckley. I am delighted that his voice has been silenced. The NPR/PBS gushing over what an erudite person he was really is enough to make you throw up on the spot.

I think of the 1980s (and really still today), about the stigma that contributed to so many unnecessary HIV deaths. I think of a gay male couple with HIV that I once knew in Hendersonville, Tenn., who had HIV and lived with a shotgun by their bed because of local Klan activity targeting them.

I think of the African-American brother who lives in the halfway house where I work who has HIV and is in recovery but is afraid to speak at AA meetings, lest people get to know him, find out he has HIV and then shun him.

I remember the young Ray brothers in Florida, whose house was firebombed in the 1980s when neighbors found out that the young hemophiliacs had contracted HIV via blood transfusion—in the era when the American Red Cross blocked hepatitis B testing (as a surrogate marker for HIV) because they were afraid they would lose blood donations.

All this led to many unnecessary infections—certainly tens of thousands in the early 1980s. I think of myself, who was dismissed as a volunteer from Nashville CARE AIDS organization in 1988 for organizing demonstrations and criticizing the governor in the media after the state legislature had passed a law in 1986 specifically removing disability discrimination protections for people with HIV—only people with HIV!

So many terrible memories, so much pain and death! Buckley’s role was to “legitimize” the hate and oppression by giving it his “thoughtful” analysis! I can almost hear the dead voices, still screaming in pain, of the thousands who met their early deaths because of the environment created by Buckley and his ilk.

We owe it to our comrades and all who have gone on too early—Danton Peres and Marshall Yates, to name just two—to redouble our fight against the “state” formulation of what passes for health care and their HIV profit-maker drug company partners. Let’s build a socialist world with our Workers World Party!

**— Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston**

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Support for FMPR teachers grows as the struggle continues

By Arturo Pérez-Saad

The Federation of Puerto Rican Teachers (FMPR), the largest union in Puerto Rico, is an independent union representing 44,000 members, more than 80 percent of whom are women.

The FMPR went on strike on Feb. 21 in defiance of Law 45, which outlaws strikes by public sector workers. The union had for 29 months attempted to negotiate a new contract in good faith with the Puerto Rican government, when the government decertified the union on Jan. 8.

The teachers were demanding better working conditions, including reduction in class sizes, adequate teaching materials and improvements in facilities for students. They opposed charter schools and privatization of public schools, and demanded a wage increase (their last

increase was in 1996). There was a lot of support for the strike from students, parents and other Puerto Rican unions.

In ten days on the picket lines, dozens of strikers were criminalized and brutalized by the Puerto Rican police, who deployed their Shock Force against the peaceful picketers. Criminal charges were brought against at least four teachers.

On March 5, the FMPR held a workers' and delegates' assembly at the Roberto Clemente Coliseum in San Juan. More than 10,000 teachers came to cast their vote on a tentative agreement reached by the union and the government. The majority voted to "postpone" the strike and demanded that the Puerto Rican government uphold their end of the agreement.

Where does the FMPR stand now? The union is still decertified. The frame-up

charges against FMPR members are not resolved—including at least five teachers with phony criminal charges for participating in the daily pickets and 17 teachers and one social worker unilaterally suspended from work without pay in Utuado this past August by the Department of Education without cause. The government promised that there will be no retaliation on the workers for joining the picket lines or for violating Law 45; that charter schools will not be introduced; that facilities will be repaired; that teaching materials will be supplied by the Department of Education; that class sizes will be reduced; and that the teachers will receive a raise. These promises must be enforced!

Unfortunately, the Service Employees International Union's international vice president, Dennis Rivera, sabotaged the FMPR strike by meeting privately with Puerto Rican Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá. The meeting was to hatch a plan for Rivera and the SEIU to destroy the FMPR, the union democratically chosen by the rank and file to represent them. Juan Gonzalez of the New York Daily News called this "a shameful betrayal of solidarity." (Feb. 29)

Rivera is following the same policies of SEIU president Andy Stern, which is suicide for the union and for working class solidarity. Rivera's conduct is similar to strikebreaking and is a blot on the historic tradition of SEIU District 1199, one of the most progressive and respected unions in the country.

Delegates from the New York City United Federation of Teachers and the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York have passed strong resolutions in support of the teachers. The FMPR needs the 1199 union delegates to show solidarity by putting pressure on

their leadership to reverse its disastrous course in this matter. It would also be an action of solidarity if every public worker union passed resolutions in support of the FMPR.

On March 13 Tania Hernández, a FMPR teacher and mother of two who was brutalized by the police during the strike, had trumped up charges against her dropped by the Supreme Court; however, two other teachers did not. The FMPR has vowed to have all teachers that were penalized for participating in the picket or supporting the FMPR absolved of any charges. To support the Utuado 18—three of whom have health issues, and none of whom are receiving pay—visit maestrosdeutuado-suspendidos.blogspot.com.

Last week the Puerto Rican press carried articles attempting to discredit FMPR President Rafael Feliciano in retaliation for the successful strike and wins by the FMPR.

Hernández and Feliciano will be in New York City speaking to teachers, union representatives, FMPR supporters, students and workers on April 3-6. For more information, visit mysite.verizon.net/vze-2kxcd/fmprsupportcommitteenewyork/index.html.

Although the Puerto Rican government claims to have the FMPR decertified under "Law 45," which was passed in 1998, this law only applies to labor unions. The FMPR has also been a bona fide organization since 1966 under the "Brotherhood or Bona Fide Organization Law 134," which gives social and economic rights to organizations to represent workers in negotiations.

On March 5 more than 10,000 teachers signed FMPR union cards with dues check off, discarding the lies of the government and Department of Education. □

The Flint Sit-Down Strike

'Without the women that strike would have been lost'

Continued from page 4

down to fit their smaller hands.

The Times took note of "the new automotive strike organization," quoting Johnson as saying, "We will form a picket line around the men, and if the police want to fire, they'll just have to fire into us." (Philip S Foner, "Women and the American Labor Movement")

Because relatively few Black men worked in GM's Jim Crow operation, few Black women were involved with the Brigade. A notable exception was Leola Combs, spouse of Buick foundry worker and early union supporter Prince Combs. It had been at the Combs family home that Black union supporters held clandestine meetings.

Black union activists had a high regard for the Women's Brigade. After the strike, Johnson often shared the podium with Roscoe Van Zandt, a Black janitor who joined the white line workers in the sit-down. Referring to Johnson, Black Buick union leader Henry Clark remarked years later, "She was a wildcat."

When workers took over Chevy Plants 4 and 9, the Emergency Brigade removed all doubts about the women's critical role.

When the police fired tear gas into Plant 9, it was the women who smashed the windows to allow the gas to escape. Seventy years later Brigade veteran Elizabeth Anderson Schneider remembers, "I can still in my mind just see the police officers lined up right there on Kearsley, and we had clubs, big clubs, we was breaking those window lights."

Later "Captain" Johnson and her five "lieutenants" barricaded the doors at Plant 4 to keep the police from storming in. "Just as it was beginning to look too risky for us," Johnson recalled, "we saw the Emergency Brigade marching towards us, singing 'Solidarity Forever' and 'Hold the Fort.' When they arrived I climbed into the sound car ... and instructed the women to lock arms and set up an oval picket line to prevent the police from entering the plant until it could be secured." The women had barely recuperated from the gas-sing at Plant 9 when they forced the police to back away from Plant 4. (Footage of this was included in the Academy Award-nominated documentary, "With Babies and Banners.")

On Feb. 3, 1937, designated by strike leaders as "Women's Day," some 700 women paraded through Flint's business district as the temperature hovered around zero. After their parade they joined a mass march of ten thousand, the union's answer to an injunction ordering the strikers out of the plants.

On Feb. 11, 1937, after a 44-day occupation, the men emerged from the plants victorious. Their gratitude to the women was immeasurable. "The women of Flint have made their fame and are known throughout the world for their heroic stand," exclaimed strike leader Bob Travis.

"They were fighters," recalled Brigade member Geraldine Blankenship, seven decades later. "They were a great bunch of gals and had it not been for them that strike would have been lost."

Martha Grevatt has been a UAW Chrysler worker for 20 years. This article is part of a chapter in Grevatt's book, "In Our Hands is Placed a Power: the Flint Sit-down Strike," which will be published by World View Forum later this year.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

RI Poor Peoples March

Continued from page 2

RI HUD Tenant Project, DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality) and DARE Youth, People to End Homelessness, the R.I. Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee and many others.

Support has been growing day by day. AFSCME District Council 94 has endorsed and has taken on mobilizing members to participate. Numerous state representatives and senators are supportive of the effort.

The R.I. Minority Caucus in the legislature has taken a strong stand against proposed budget cuts, in opposition to the Democratic Party leadership. The budget cuts target every aspect and area of human need. It is the mobilization of the people that will stop them!

For more info contact the Poor Peoples Campaign, 401-837-7663 or liberator401@gmail.com. □

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Detroit: Monday, March 24 at 6:30 pm
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US Cuba labor Exchange: 313.587.9285

Boston: Tuesday, March 25 at 6:30 pm
USW 8751, Painters & Allied Trades DC 35 Building
25 Colgate Road, Roslindale, MA 02131
For more information: USW Local 8751 • 617.524.7073
info@bostonschoolbusunion.org • www.bostonschoolbusunion.org

New York: Wednesday, March 26
For more information: 212-633-6646



SINALTRAINAL represents Colombian workers of several well-know multinational corporations in the food and beverage industries.

Mientras aumentan los despidos El gobierno federal da \$200 mil millones a los bancos

Por Gary Wilson

A solo días del peor reporte sobre la situación de los empleos en casi dos décadas, un gigantesco estímulo financiero fue provisto por el gobierno capitalista no para l@s trabajador@s despedid@s, sino para los bancos más grandes.

Las noticias del 11 de marzo que decían que el Banco de la Reserva Federal tomó la decisión sin precedente de prácticamente regalar \$200 mil millones de dólares en préstamos a los bancos más grandes del mundo, al comienzo sorprendió a Wall Street. Las acciones del Dow Jones dejaron de bajar, pero luego comenzaron a descender de nuevo. Al final del día, estas ya habían subido unos 400 puntos más que al cierre del día anterior.

Wall Street se alegró. El gigantesco regalo va a los bolsillos no de l@s más necesitad@s, sino a los bolsillos de los bancos más ricos y a los capitalistas financieros.

El Banco de la Reserva Federal está dando los fondos de la tesorería federal a cambio de los préstamos depredadores de las viviendas. Esta acción libera a los prestatarios, que en su mayoría son bancos, de la crisis inmediata creada por los préstamos en desfallo, y no hace nada para proteger de desahucios o embargos a l@s dueñ@s de las casas. Y eventualmente la clase obrera, como pagadora de impuestos, carga con la cuenta de todo esto.

Mientras que la constitución dice que sólo el congreso puede cobrar impuestos y gastarlo, la pregunta es la siguiente, ¿dónde están los gritos de protesta sobre este regalo del dinero de los impuestos que se ha hecho sin autorización alguna?

Efectivamente, el pasado diciembre cuando el Congreso votaba por las medidas para “aliviar” la crisis económica, incluyendo una pequeña “rebaja en los impuestos” la provisión que habría extendido los beneficios por desempleo y los cupones de alimentos fue omitida, mientras que la provisión de fondos de emergencia para las grandes compañías de hipotecas fue expandida.

La edición del periódico Wall Street Journal del 11 de marzo afirmó que “Los esfuerzos de los federales no elimi-

narán la causa básica de los problemas económicos.” Y eso es correcto. Solo servirá para engrosar los bolsillos de los banqueros y financieros.

Mientras que la bolsa de valores terminó su día con el alza más grande en dos años, aún así no pudo hacer retroceder el descenso de 500 puntos de los tres días anteriores. Y aún el índice se mantiene bajo, con una caída de casi 2.000 puntos del alza que tuvo en octubre del 2007.

63.000 empleos se perdieron en febrero

La fuerte caída de empleos el mes pasado—63.000 empleos se perdieron—fue la caída más severa en un mes en más de cinco años. El desempleo está ahora a un nivel no visto desde el 1990.

No incluidos en la cifra de 63.000 son las 450.000 personas que el Departamento de Trabajo de los EEUU dice que han salido de la fuerza laboral en febrero—es decir, han abandonado la búsqueda de empleo. Si hubieran sido incluidas, la tasa de desempleo sería un 5,1 por ciento en vez de un 4,8 por ciento.

Pero eso no es todo. También quedan por fuera l@s millones de encarcelad@s al igual que l@s jóvenes de la clase trabajadora que se encuentran en las fuerzas militares porque no pueden encontrar empleos. Ningun@ de ell@s están contad@s, aunque claramente están desemplead@s.

Rebecca Blank del Instituto de Políticas Económicas dijo al Comité Económico Conjunto del Congreso el 7 de marzo que la tasa de desempleo actual entre hombres jóvenes es mucho más alta de lo que señalan las cifras oficiales.

“Al expandir la población encarcelada, hemos quitado más y más hombres jóvenes de la cuenta de fuerza laboral”, testificó ella. Blank dijo que las cifras ajustadas demuestran que el nivel de desempleo ahora es casi igual que durante la recesión grande de 1990, cuando oficialmente era de un 5,5 por ciento. Esa recesión resultó en la caída de la presidencia del primer George Bush.

El segundo George Bush dijo el 8 de marzo, en respuesta al reporte sobre el desempleo del Departamento de Trabajo que fue publicado el día anterior, “Perder un trabajo es doloroso”. Aparentemente

estuvo pensando mayormente en sí mismo.

Los periódicos sensacionalistas y los programas noticieros televisados, desde CNN hasta la cadena Fox, no gritaron “recesión”. Pero la voz sería de los ejecutivos corporativos, el New York Times, reportó que los economistas de Wall Street están ahora de acuerdo en que el país está actualmente en una recesión económica.

“El desempleo típicamente comienza a subir sólo después de que ya haya empezado una recesión”, reportó el New York Times del 8 de marzo.

Cae la tasa de ganancia

Los recortes de empleos es la respuesta capitalista a la disminución de la tasa de ganancias. El fracaso de hacer ganancias constituye la crisis.

En cualquier crisis capitalista, los patronos siempre culpan a l@s trabajador@s. A veces dicen que l@s trabajadores no están comprando lo suficiente, no están sacando préstamos suficientes o no están utilizando las tarjetas de crédito lo suficiente. En otras ocasiones dicen que los salarios o los beneficios de l@s trabajador@s son demasiado altos.

Nada de eso es la razón de la crisis, pero eso no impide que los patronos culpen a l@s trabajador@s. Es la disminución de la tasa de ganancias lo que verdaderamente ha creado la crisis de la economía capitalista.

Cuando cae la tasa de ganancias, los patronos se vuelven despiadados. Al tratar de incrementar la tasa de ganancias, cortan los empleos y los sueldos y reducen los beneficios. La tasa de explotación de l@s trabajador@s aumenta.

Las ganancias son la fuerza motriz del capitalismo. Las ganancias provienen de la labor de l@s trabajador@s. Las ganancias son el sueldo no pagado.

Los capitalistas siempre están en competencia entre ellos por las ganancias. Parte de esa competencia es la introducción de nuevas tecnologías que aumentan la tasa de explotación de l@s trabajador@s.

En “El Capital”, Carlos Marx mostró que los capitalistas no introducen la tecnología nueva para bajar los costos de producción, aunque eso puede pasar.

Lo hacen para aumentar la tasa de ganancias.

El primer capitalista que introduce tecnología nueva, aumenta la productividad del trabajo. La producción de la mercancía hecha al usar la nueva tecnología cuesta menos por unidad. Entonces el capitalista aumenta su propia ganancia al vender la mercancía al precio viejo o a un precio más bajo mientras incrementa su proporción en el mercado.

Pero cuando los capitalistas en competencia también comienzan a usar la tecnología nueva o a introducir tecnología nueva más productiva, entonces se desvanece la alta tasa de ganancias. Y como para entonces los capitalistas en general están gastando mucho más en la tecnología y menos en l@s trabajador@s, la tasa de ganancias actualmente cae—porque las ganancias vienen de la explotación del trabajo humano, no del uso de tecnologías.

Cuando cae la tasa de ganancias, los capitalistas empiezan a recortar los sueldos y beneficios y a eliminar los empleos. Sube el desempleo. Los capitalistas también responden a la caída de ganancias subiendo los precios, lo cual crea inflación.

Para los patronos, el despedir a l@s trabajador@s es una medida para tratar de incrementar la tasa de ganancias. Hoy en día, no hay absolutamente ninguna restricción en cuanto a despidos de trabajo. Los patronos pueden dar alguna razón o puede que no den ninguna. No importa cuántos años un/a trabajador/a haya tenido tal puesto de trabajo o la cantidad de ganancias que él/ella haya ganado para el patrón durante ese tiempo.

Claramente esto no es justicia. Aún en tiempos de crisis económica, l@s trabajador@s deben tener el poder de alguna decisión sobre su propio empleo. L@s trabajador@s tienen el derecho a proteger la inversión de su propia labor en la compañía.

Cada compañía está construida sobre la labor de l@s trabajador@s. Eso hace que l@s trabajador@s sean l@s inversionistas principales de la compañía.

Mientras la recesión se profundiza, se hace aún más importante que l@s trabajador@s luchen por este derecho esencial para proteger sus puestos de trabajo, y que ganen esta lucha. □

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Boston: Martes 25 de marzo a las 6:30 PM
Edificio de USW 8751, Pintores y oficios asociados DC 35,
Colgate Road # 25, Roslindale, MA 02131

Detroit: Lunes 24 de marzo a 6:30 pm
UAW Local 22 4300 Michigan Ave. Detroit, MI 48210

New York: miércoles 26 de marzo
Para mas información: 212-633-6646

ESCUCHE a **Edgar Páez**, líder sindical colombiano quien hablará sobre las luchas sindicales en Colombia y la forma de unir las luchas por los derechos sindicales globalmente.

¡No a los asesinatos financiados por corporaciones de sindicalistas colombiano@s!

